



SPRING MOUNTAIN RANCH STATE PARK

**RECREATION MASTER PLAN
2008**

**Nevada Division of State Parks
901 S. Stewart Street
Carson City, NV 89701
(775) 684-2770**

In the spring of 2007 the Nevada Division of State Parks began collecting information and holding public meetings to determine how Spring Mt. State Park's Recreational, Cultural and Natural Resources should be managed into the future. Three public meetings were held in 2007 which resulted a new plan for the Park. The following summarizes that plan. The plan in its entirety can be found on the State Parks website. <http://parks.nv.gov/masterplans/status.htm>

PARK CONCEPT

The Recommended Plan proposes activities that provide the visitor a closer look at the natural and historical resources of this park. Increased hiking, enhanced picnicking and ADA access, and interpretive opportunities will accomplish this. This plan also provides for larger local and regional educational and interpretive events.

General Management Policies - This is a year-round park in which day-use only policies will be maintained (exceptions for special-use overnight permittees). Only low impact uses will be allowed.

All facility and sign designs will be created sympathetic to the "American Ranch Style" and with the park's historic colors where possible, and examine ways to incorporate green technologies in new facilities.



Natural Resources - The Park will continue weed abatement especially on tamarisk. The Park will also continue to work cooperatively with NDOW & USFWS to manage killifish habitat and with BLM to manage burros and other species as needed.

Operational/Residential Area and Pastures - Several operational proposals in this plan aim at increasing staff and resource efficiency. The park

offices will continue to be located in its current location at the entrance to the reservoir trail. This location allows greater monitoring of such plan proposals as increased access to the historic structures and to area trails. The road to the housing and park maintenance building will continue to be closed to the public.

Staff management of the cultural events pavilion area should continue to be reduced. Facility users should continue to assume a greater role in the day-to-day management of special events to free staff time for other visitor responsibilities.

An orchard may be added along perimeter of the pastures with a management plan in place and maintenance by the docents agreed upon. Docents would also assume financial and administrative responsibility for maintaining livestock for interpretive purposes according to a park livestock plan.

Visitor Center - The plan continues the role of providing a visitors center and historic ranch house combination. This center functions as a historical museum and provides environmental education. The center will continue to reflect multiple owners and timeframes. The Ranch



House will be open for both self-guided and docent-guided tours.

Other exhibits focusing on the environmental resources of the Ranch will also be developed and placed on the back patio at the ranch house including an interpretive desert garden of native plants. These exterior exhibits will be available to visitors even when the visitor center is closed. These exhibits will also provide trailhead information for the educational trails at the park.

Historic Structures - This plan includes additional gates and fencing to protect historic resources. It also includes restoring the Kennel, Springhouse, Private Stable, & Cowboy House. This includes structural stabilization if necessary, and furnishing the buildings with period furniture and tools. Interior access will be available on guided tours. The expanded trail system would allow other visitors close to the structures and provide detailed interpretive information. Detailed direction for each historical building can be found in the Resource Management plan.



Day Use Areas: Picnicking and Trails



Family Picnic Area - Limited picnic expansion opportunities are provided. The existing family picnic area will be redesigned and improved to better accommodate ADA requirements. Development here will include picnic tables, grills and shade structures or

landscaping. The restroom is ADA accessible and should not need replacement or expansion during the next 15 years (life of this plan).

Trails Interpretation - New interpretive signs will be placed at historic buildings, Lake Harriet, and the end of Sandstone Canyon Trail. Public education will be an important part of all signage. All will be interpretive in nature and designed as educational opportunities. Details on the interpretive program can be found in the Interpretive Plan for the park and is located at the park office.

Trails Management - The four main trails are the Sandstone Canyon trail, Ash Grove, Ash Grove extension and the Overlook trail. The Ash Grove extension trail bridge will be installed to allow for better access across the wash. New trails will include the reservoir



trail and the equestrian trailhead connector trail. The road around the reservoir will be open as a trail to the public and killifish environmental education will be the theme of interpretive efforts.

Connectivity with the public lands around the park will be provided for by replacing the slash pile northwest of the fee booth with an Equestrian Trailhead; restrooms, equestrian trailer parking, & hitching post. The Cowboy trailhead and trail will be closed. A Partnership with the BLM will need to occur in order to connect this facility with the “future” escarpment trail and other trails on the BLM managed National Conservation Area.

Concern about a possible increase in vandalism accompanying an increase in public access prompts discussions of a variety of trail management strategies including trail closures during and after flood events, during bighorn sheep migration or extreme fire hazard conditions. An increase in interpretive resources and public education will also occur.

Cultural Events Pavilion - This plan proposes the continued planting designed to screen the pavilion and the parking lot from view from the road. The restrooms at the pavilion are in need of expansion. The leach field will need inspection and work as necessary to maintain function. The existing gravel amphitheater access road will be paved (hard surface).



In addition, this plan carries forward from the 1988 plan, the following criteria to help determine the appropriateness of program expansion: 1) The programs should not detract from the inherent tranquil experience of the park; 2) The programs should not decrease the availability of the existing group use area; 3) Program expansion should not in any way restrict visitor access to the rest of the park or any of its facilities; and 4) Any program expansion should not increase staff management commitment to this facility.

Group Picnic Areas - The pavilion will continue to accommodate small groups of 150 – 160 persons. Landscape screening will be maintained to minimize the visual impact between facilities and parking areas.

New Group Use Area - this facility can be designed for up to 320 person capacity with 110 parking spaces, grassed play area, gravel parking lot with dust abatement, and new restrooms.



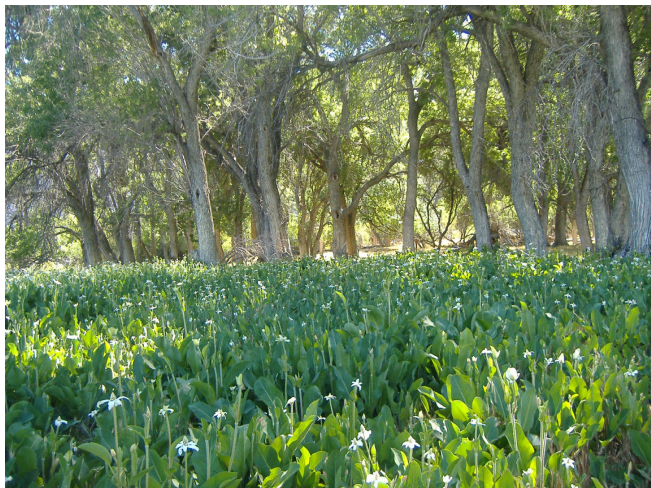
Planting/Landscape Themes - Carried forward from the 1988 plan: As park development progresses additional planting will follow an overall planting concept. This concept recognizes the existing visual integrity of the Valley and focuses on maintaining and improving it. Where feasible, vegetation plantings will be used to screen structures from both long distance and short-range views. The designers should choose native plants for nearly all landscape uses. This is particularly important for this park for a

number of reasons. First, this area is nationally recognized for its scenic beauty and unique environment. Second, the area exists as a delicate balance of water, plants and animals. Introduced species may disrupt this balance and cannot add to the visitor's enjoyment or understanding of the natural environment.



The planting scheme recognizes two primary landscape needs. The first, around visitor use areas, must meet certain criteria. In addition to being drought tolerant with native-compatible color and form, plants in this category must stand up to a certain amount of visitor abuse and must grow moderate to fast. Native species should be used wherever possible, yet other species may be introduced to meet these criteria.

In Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, five different areas merit additional landscaping. The proposed second group use area, the cultural events pavilion and parking lot all require visual buffering from the highway and park entrance road. Maintenance of privacy screening is needed surrounding the park staff residences. The Orchard should be planted using research on fruit trees originally planted in the area during those time frames and may include Heritage or Heirloom varieties as necessary to ensure survival and proper plant selection for the site.



The second landscape sub-theme includes all restoration areas such as the Ash Grove. In these areas, all species are native. The restoration plan must plan for naturally sustainable communities, in natural soil conditions, with little or no additional irrigation. They should be irrigated only during the establishment period. This plan recommends continued study by botanists in this area prior to implementing environmental restoration work.

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